



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO MAKE YOURS

REFLECTION POINTS 19 JULY 2020

MICAH 5:2-5A CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV)

“² Bethlehem Ephrath,
you are one of the smallest towns
in the nation of Judah.

But the Lord will choose
one of your people
to rule the nation—
someone whose family
goes back to ancient times.^[a]

³ The Lord will abandon Israel
only until this ruler is born,
and the rest of his family
returns to Israel.

⁴ Like a shepherd
taking care of his sheep,
this ruler will lead
and care for his people
by the power and glorious name
of the Lord his God.

His people will live securely,
and the whole earth will know
his true greatness,

⁵ because he will bring peace.

It has been said the book of Micah is a lesson in taking our faith in God seriously. Micah was someone whose faith shaped the way he lived and responded to the society around him.

It is generally accepted the first three chapters of the book of Micah can be attributed to Micah while the remaining chapters contain various later editorial additions including the passage above. These were added later, most likely to introduce a more hopeful message in response to Micah's devastating predictions concerning the fate of Jerusalem.

In the chapters credited to Micah he rails against the social injustices of his day. Micah focuses his attacks on the wealthy who have acquired their wealth through the violent seizure of land and property from the poor. He also censures the government leaders for failing to protect the innocent and powerless from what was occurring.

It was not just the secular leaders who are failing the people. Micah accuses the spiritual leaders of leading people astray. Making a great show of their piety while being just as greedy as the secular leaders.

It is apparent that Micah's protest against the injustices of his day was shaped by his understanding of God.

A feature of Micah's theology is that Micah portrays God as refraining from direct intervention. God will not be to blame for what will occur. The inevitable collapse of society that Micah predicts will not be the result of God's actions as it will be the consequences of human actions.

In expressing his anger Micah believed he was giving voice to God's anger at the suffering caused by injustice and inequality. Similarly, Micah believed his censure of the leaders of his day was giving expression to God's denunciation of leaders who misuse power and abuse the trust placed in them.

In so doing Micah opens up the possibility God's intervention in our world is through those voices in our midst speaking out against unfair structures and systems

Reading Micah's withering denunciation of what was occurring in his day one is left to contemplate the social injustices and failures of leadership we observe today.

Leaders in countries with some of the highest numbers of COVID cases who are failing to put their people first with deadly consequences. Leaders seemingly more concerned with gaining an advantage over their political opponents than with solving problems.

While we are fortunate in our nation to have leaders at all levels of government committed to protecting lives and livelihoods, the COVID crisis has still exposed some of the cracks in our society. The casualisation of our workforce leaving many without support. The lack of adequate social housing in our nation.

When we eventually do emerge from the COVID pandemic into what many have predicted will be a different world could it be that God is requiring us to be like Micah – passionate advocates for political leaders and economic systems less concerned with wealth and power and more focussed on compassion and lessening the gap between rich and poor.

- What injustices have you been particularly aware of during this pandemic?
- Where can you be an advocate for change?
- Where do you see signs of God at work in our world?